REMARKS

Claims 1-20 are pending, including independent claims 1, 6, 8 and 15. Applicants' previous response was partly persuasive. Claims 4, 10-14, 16-18, and 20 are objected to but are found to contain patentable subject matter. Claims 1-3, 5-9, 15, and 19 are rejected over different combinations of prior art. Applicants respectfully disagree with the new rejections but have amended independent claims 1, 6, 8 and 15 to clarify the claimed invention.

Claims 1 and 8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over U.S. Patent 6,438,695 ("Maufer") in view of either U.S. Patent 6,876,670 ("Budrikis") or U.S. Patent 6,947,384 ("Bare").

Maufer is directed to a system for allowing controlled access to a networked communication, particularly a wiretap of an encrypted communication over a computer network. Maufer is cited to show that a packet can be encrypted, but the encryption process is conventional and not explained (e.g., col. 9, lines 17-24; col. 10, lines 62-67; col. 12, lines 1-3). By itself, Maufer is not applicable to Applicants' invention.

The Examiner concedes that Maufer does not perform predetermined processing when the packet is received within a valid time duration, but asserts that Budrikis and Bare disclose this feature. Applicants disagree. Budrikis describes a system in which timing information is provided to routers in a network such as the Internet to facilitate the timely transfer of data packets encoding real time signals (see Abstract). This reference does not describe reading out data in a message and performing predetermined processing when the message is received within a valid time duration. Rather, Budrikis is referring to information in a packet that identifies the time duration of the encoded signal segment and the time the assembly of the packet commenced in order to control the routing of the packet so as to reduce traffic overloading and provide continuous recovery of the signal at the destination (e.g., Abstract; col. 2, lines 20-35; col. 4, lines 45-58; col. 5, lines 26-41, 50-55; col. 6, lines 1-14). Again, this is not pertinent to Applicants' invention.

Bare is directed to a protocol for the control of switches in a communication network to improve bandwidth utilization and load balancing (e.g., col. 1, lines 14-19; col. 8, lines 45-52). The Examiner asserts that Bare's use of a hop count is equivalent to the valid time duration of Applicants' invention. Applicants disagree. The hop count field initially is set to zero and is incremented by each switch the packet encounters. The hop count is limited, e.g., to 15 switches, to limit the diameter of the network and ensure convergence. (See col. 29, lines 37-47.) The hop count is not a time duration.

Thus, regarding independent claims 1 and 8, the cited references do not describe or suggest a message processing device which, inter alia, checks a valid time duration included in a message header and, when the message is received within the specified time duration, transfers the message on to another message processing device and also reads out data in the body of the message and executes predetermined processing based on the data. However, Applicants have clarified the claimed invention by amending claims 1 and 8 to recite "predetermined processing based on the data" (claim 1) and transferring "the message to at least one other message processing device" (claim 8). Independent claims 6 and 15 have been amended in the same way.

Claims 1, 8 and 9 were also rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Budrikis alone. As explained above, Budrikis does not describe the use of a valid time duration included in a message header. Moreover, Budrikis does not disclose reading out data in the message and performing predetermined processing based on the data when the message is received within the valid time duration.

Claims 2 and 3 are rejected as obvious over Budrikis in view of U.S. Patent 6,304,556 ("Haas"). Haas is cited as allegedly disclosing the use of a zone determination. Applicants respectfully disagree. The cited passage in Haas is referring to a "zone radius" as a predefined number of hops from a node (col. 6, lines 34-37). Thus, the zone radius in Haas does not define a geographical zone as claimed, only a set number of nodes. Because Haas is directed to an ad-hoc network in which the nodes can be highly mobile (e.g., col. 1, lines 1-25), the hop number for a zone radius does not define a specific geographical zone.

Claim 5 is rejected as obvious over Budrikis in view of "Applicant's Admitted Prior Art." However, Applicants submit that Budrikis is not applicable as explained above, and "Applicant's Admitted Prior Art" does not cure the deficiencies of Budrikis.

Claims 6, 7, 15 and 19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over either Haas or U.S. Patent 6,130,881 ("Stiller"). Haas does not describe the claimed zone determination unit as explained above, nor the other limitations of the claims. Stiller is even further removed. The Examiner apparently is referring to a feature in Stiller wherein the known number of hops to a particular destination node is stored (see Abstract). No geographical zone is identified or stored in Stiller, nor are the other limitations of the claims disclosed.

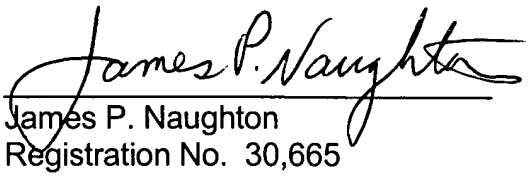
Claims 6, 15 and 19 are also rejected as obvious over U.S. Patent 6,317,837 ("Kenworthy") in view of U.S. Patent 6,700,891 ("Wong"). Kenworthy describes a network attached device having integrated firewall security (see, e.g., Abstract; col. 1, lines 5-9; col. 1, line 66 to col. 2, line 13) and is not relevant to Applicants' invention. The Examiner concedes that Stiller does not actually describe a geographical zone, but asserts that Wong teaches this feature. Applicants disagree. The cited passage of Wong (col. 3, lines 24+) merely describes that a packet can be filtered various ways, including according to device types, or zone designations. In Wong, a "zone" is simply a predetermined grouping of devices (col. 4, lines 48-53).

Thus, regarding independent claims 6 and 15, the cited references do not describe or suggest a message processing device which, inter alia, checks a valid geographical zone included in a message header and, when the message is received within the valid geographical zone, transfers the message on to another message processing device and also reads out data in the body of the message and executes predetermined processing based on the data. As mentioned above, these independent claims have been amended to more specifically describe the claimed invention.

In summary, Applicants submit that the claims, as amended, are patentable over the cited art, and Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of this application. If the Examiner still believes the application is not in condition for

allowance, he is requested to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney at 312-321-4723.

Respectfully submitted,



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